

ITEM 9-A

CITY OF ALAMEDA

Memorandum

To: Honorable President and
Members of the Planning Board

From: Andrew Thomas
Planning Services Manager

Date: October 24, 2011

Re: Design Review – New Plan Nursery Building - Ploughshares
Nursery (PLN11-0286) at 2701 Main Street

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This design review application is a proposal to build a new freestanding building at the Ploughshares Nursery. The proposed design includes a number of unique sustainable design features that may generate significant public interest; therefore, staff chose to refer the design review application to the Planning Board in accordance with Section 30-36.1.

Staff is recommending that the Planning Board approve the design review application.

BACKGROUND

The Alameda Point Collaborative (APC) owns and operates the Ploughshares Nursery and APC's Growing Youth Farm on their property at 2701 Main Street. Ploughshares is a nonprofit job training program and retail nursery specializing in organically grown California native, drought tolerant and edible plants. The facility includes space to sell and propagate plants, store seeds, and hold gardening education workshops for Ploughshares customers and the local community.

On May 23, 2005, the Alameda Planning Board adopted Resolution PB-05-16, granting Interim Use Permit UP-05-0004 (attachment 1) allowing the Alameda Point Collaborative to develop and operate a plant nursery on the site. The Use Permit references APC's "Ploughshares Nursery Conceptual Plan." that includes plans for demonstration gardens, educational facilities, and a retail center. The Use Permit acknowledged that the "conceptual plan" would not be constructed all at one time, but rather would be developed in phases over many years as the business grew and new sources of funds became available. Pursuant to the 2005 use permit, new permanent structures require design review approval.

Over the course of the last six years, the Ploughshares Nursery has grown into a commercially viable nursery, a successful job training center, and an educational

center. The current application represents the next major step in the development of the Ploughshares Nursery.

ANALYSIS

The Alameda Point Collaborative is requesting Design Review approval for construction of a new 2,580 square foot retail building for the Ploughshares Nursery. The plans for the new building are attached as attachment 2.

The structure will provide Ploughshares with a new visual presence on Main Street and provide space for year-round, indoor retail sales and educational workshops. The building itself is a demonstration of sustainable design principles. The building will employ a number of sustainable design strategies and alternative construction technologies including straw bale construction, earth bag construction, and the use of salvaged, donated and surplus materials for non-structural building components such as windows, doors, flooring and wall materials.

The building will utilize alternative energy sources including Photo Voltaic (PV) panels for solar energy. All windows will be operable so that the building can be cooled through natural ventilation. The building also includes a small living roof and berming system at the root cellar which will control the temperature without a mechanical system. The structure's form and orientation is designed to protect occupants from the strong westerly weather and wind patterns, yet utilize the strong southerly sun for solar PV consumption. All storm water will be collected on site in rain catchments barrels and used for on-site plant irrigation. All grey water generated on site will be filtered and treated in the on-site bioswale.

Staff is able to make the findings for Design Review approval. Pursuant to Section 30-37.5, the following findings must be made to approve a design review application:

- a. The proposed design is consistent with the General Plan, Zoning Ordinance, and the City of Alameda design review manual. The site is designated for "Neighborhood Business" in the City of Alameda General Plan and the proposal implements General Plan policies regarding sustainable, environmentally sensitive design and policies regarding the redevelopment of Alameda Point into a mixed use community. The proposed improvements represent an important re-investment in Alameda Point that will support additional investments by public and private entities.
- b. The proposal is appropriate for the site, is compatible with adjacent or neighboring buildings or surroundings, and promotes harmonious transitions in scale and character in areas between different designated land uses. The one story design will blend with the existing one and two story buildings that are located behind the site on the former Naval Air Station. The building is situated in the middle of the site and surrounded by

large landscape areas. Adjacent existing and future residential areas will be located across Barbers Point Road and well buffered from the retail operations within the building. The landscape nursery use provides a good buffer between the existing and future residents of Alameda Point and Main Street, which serves as a major transportation artery for west Alameda.

- c. The proposed design of the structure(s) and exterior materials and landscaping are visually compatible with the surrounding development, and design elements have been incorporated to ensure the compatibility of the structure with the character and uses of adjacent development. The retail building materials include a combination of salvaged wood sheathing, stucco finishes, and wooden trellises. This combination of materials will be visually compatible with the materials of the surrounding developments. The earthen berms and large landscape areas will also blend well with the adjacent residential areas and the Main Street park and flood control swales.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to the CEQA guideline section 15303 – New Construction of Small Structures; The building is located in an urbanized area and is less than 10,000 square feet in size. See Section 15301 subsection c.

PUBLIC NOTICE

A notice for this application was provided to all property owners within 100 feet of the property consistent with Section 30-36.2 of the Alameda Municipal Code. Staff has not received any public comments on this project.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Planning Board find the project exempt from further review under CEQA pursuant to guideline section 15303; and approve Design Review Application PLN11-0286.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED BY:

Andrew Thomas, Planning Services Manager

Attachments:

1. 2005 Use Permit Resolution
2. Project Plans
3. 2011 Draft Design Review Resolution